

## Kevin Smith, Testimony

My earliest memories of church were attending a small mainline in our rural town of Upstate New York. My mom was a professing Lutheran and I remember reciting our dinner blessing “thank you God for food so good, help us do the things we should. Amen”. Unfortunately, as I grew older, I had slowly drifted from any regular attendance into just making an appearance around Christmas every now and again.

By the time I was out of the home and on my own, I had become what I would now call a “lazy agnostic”. One of my first career jobs after becoming a licensed aircraft mechanic was with an airline in Albany, New York. One of the perks of the job was that I could fly free of charge domestically, and I would often fly down to Birmingham, AL to visit my brother. Around this time, he had recently just gotten out of the Navy, was attending UAB, and had been strongly convicted by the “New Atheism” movement. He was reading the works of Dawkins, Hitchens, and Harris, and was eager to talk about his passion for this subject. Being that I looked up to him, I thought it convincing and started following where he was leading. Though he was a proponent for atheism, I do want to recognize that my brother is not the antagonist of this story, because he really provoked me to do two things: think deep thoughts about God and open my Bible for the first time. A spark had started in me, and after some time in these deep thoughts, I drew to a conclusion that I was not confident enough to say that God didn’t exist.

Some time later, after working between Albany and Boston, I wanted to move back closer to my folks living in Western Mass, and so I applied for a position at an aircraft component repair shop in Bloomfield, CT. It was a small business that had only been operating for about 5 years at that point. The owner invited me in for an interview, and gave me a tour of his shop. I was honestly impressed to see how successful his business became in a short time, especially after I learned he had left his managerial position within a larger company after almost 20 years. After the tour, we sat back in his office for some closing thoughts and I remember saying to him “what you’ve done here, this is really impressive!”. He sat back in his chair, thought for a moment and replied “Well, thank you. But this is what God did, and I helped.” Looking back on that conversation, I now know those words to have changed my life forever. Deep intellectual thoughts about God, as important as they are, moved over to make room for me to see a man, who I thought had earned the right to his credit for all his work, give all glory to a God and king that he truly believed was real. He changed the trajectory of my life forever towards King Jesus, salvation, and eventually recognizing my true vocation of helping build for God's kingdom.

I wish I could say it was an immediate change right then and there, but in the words of C.S. Lewis *“It would be nice, and fairly nearly true, to say that ‘from that time forth Eustace was a different boy.’ To be strictly accurate, he began to become a different boy. He had relapses. There were still many days when he could be very tiresome. But most of those I shall not notice. The cure had begun.”* I would eventually come to a single point of confession and committing my life to Jesus. I then met my now wife Chelsea and we decided on day one that we would always keep Jesus at the center of our lives. I have also been on a wonderful journey of Biblical studies, learning theology, hermeneutics, Hebrew, Greek and all the beautiful nerdy stuff that comes with it, satisfying all my intellectual needs. In October of 2015, Chelsea and I were baptized by Pastor Clark in the brook, and though our church journey has come with some complexity, we are happy to be now re-committed members here at Valley Brook.